

**4TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME
JANUARY 31, 2010**

**PASTOR'S CORNER
CATHOLIC SCHOOLS' WEEK**

This week is Catholic Schools' Week. The theme statement they have developed for this year says it all as far as I'm concerned. *Dividends for Life—Join the 127 elementary and high schools of the Archdiocese of Milwaukee as they celebrate Catholic education—an education you can have faith in.*

Our own parish school is a model of what a Catholic Elementary School can be with the proper support of parish, parents, and staff. We pour many resources into our school but do so with the assurance of a payoff in the years ahead, both in the lives of those who benefit from the education and faith formation they received here and in the life of our Catholic Church. As we form young people with a value based, faith based education, it will help them in the years ahead, no matter what life might bring their way, to have a solid foundation for decision making and coping. It will produce leaders for our Church. Maybe some will accept a religious vocation and that would be wonderful, but no matter what area of public life our young people enter, the education they have received here will be a source of inspiration for them and for those they encounter.

The other night while waiting for a table at a restaurant, a former student from St. Eugene school came up to me. I had forgotten his name but not some of the challenges I know he faced. He was often defiant as a young student in our school. His parents sent him to Catholic boarding school for high school. He never graduated and was dismissed for drug possession. He told me that he ended up in jail for a time but now was out and on the road to recovery. He seemed very positive, now a man in his 20's. He was glad to see me, willing to tell me his story even if only briefly, and still proud of the Catholic formation he received which, in the end, helped him through to the point he's at now. I will continue to pray for him, for his sobriety, and that he will continue to reflect on the values he was taught. I asked myself, did we waste our time and money on someone like him? Of course, the answer is no. The values we taught him are his for life. He turned away from them and tried to ignore them, but in the end used them for good. He is just one example of the meaning of the theme *Dividends for Life.*

So let's never undervalue the importance of our Catholic schools. They are always fragile and always facing budget decisions. We run them in the real world with real issues of rising and declining enrollment, many needs to be met with limited resources, and criticism at times from those who are not for them. But there is nothing like them anywhere. We truly have something to celebrate this week.

Blessings,

Fr. Ken Knippel